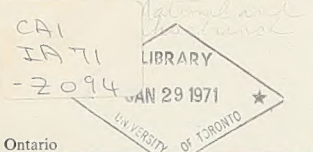


Point Pelee National Park



Ontario



In the autumn the southward migration of the monarch butterfly, dragonfly and wasp is an interesting sight. Standing on the narrow sandy beach at the tip of the Point, one can see these insects, and birds too, leaving to cross the lake. Sometimes huge aggregations of the migrating monarch butterfly festoon the shrubs and trees as they rest for the night or during inclement weather.

Two major bird migration flyways overlap at Point Pelee and each spring and autumn thousands of birds and bird watchers gather at the park. The spring migration between March 15 and June 1 is a spectacular event. At the height of the warbler migration in May, well over 100 kinds of birds can be tallied in one day by a single observer. The autumn migration begins in August, but is as at its height during September and October. Hawks by the thousands and flocks of blue jays, blackbirds and terns by the hundreds of thousands journey southwards.

Rare birds have turned up so often during the migrations that rarities are now regarded almost as commonplace. Such birds as Cassin's sparrow, Connecticut warbler and western wood pewee have been recorded.

Not all of the birds migrate through Pelee, for of the more than 300 species on the park list, some 90 species stay to nest. Birds that are extending their breeding ranges northward into Canada are often first recorded in the park. Cardinal and Carolina wren are examples.

A brief park history

The early history of Point Pelee is found in the annals and diaries of Great Lakes explorers, missionaries and fur-traders. History before the white man is found in the midden heaps and burial grounds of the Indians.

In 1670, the missionary explorers Fathers Dollier and Galinee, who were the first Europeans known to have ascended the Great Lakes as far as Sault Ste. Marie, encamped on the point.

During the War of 1812, General Brock's expedition camped at Pelee a few days before capturing Detroit and defeating the American army under General Hull.

Point Pelee was established as a national park in 1918.

How to get there

The nearest community to the park is Leamington, Ontario, situated about 30 miles from Windsor on Highway No. 3. It is also possible to get to Leamington from either Highways 98 or 401, in both cases by turning south at the village of Comber. Highways 77 and 118 also lead to Leamington. Bus services from Windsor, London, Niagara Falls and Toronto stop at Leamington.

Where to stay

Camping brings you into the closest contact with the natural environment and the values for which the park was created. Limited camping facilities for tents, trailers and other

Cover: Prickly pear cactus

Introducing a park and an idea

Canada covers half a continent, fronts on three oceans and stretches from the extreme Arctic more than half-way to the equator. There is a great variety of landforms in this immense country, and national parks have been created to preserve important examples for you and for generations to come.

The National Parks Act of 1930 specifies that national parks are "dedicated to the people . . . for their benefit, education and enjoyment" and must remain "unimpaired for future generations."

Point Pelee, the southernmost tip of the Canadian mainland, consists of 3,500 acres, made up of attractive sand beaches, forests, open parklands and a large and unique deep freshwater marsh of some 2,500 acres. Its geographical position and its location in Lake Erie give the park a mild climate and indigenous plants and animals not found anywhere else in Canada.

The park environment

Each national park has its own character, its unique story as a living outdoor museum. The Point Pelee story is that of a rare type of marsh, a small remnant of the original and true deciduous forest of North America, and a stopping place for birds along two major migration flyways.

The land - most of it isn't really there!

Lake currents mould and shape the sandspit today as they have since the time of the glaciers some 10,000 years ago, when sand was first deposited in Lake Erie by glacial meltwaters. Winds still sculpture the sands that lake currents drop along the shoreline; erosion and deposition never end.

All of the foundation of Pelee is sand, called Eastport sand in geological language.

A long, underwater ridge extends south off the tip of the point and runs almost across the lake to the American side. Some think there was once a dry-land bridge connection. It was probably such an underwater ridge that gave Pelee its start, for at the tip today lake currents and storm waves build long sand-bars and islets, using the ridge as a foundation. Often the islets become connected and lengthen the park for a day or so until erosion prevails. Over the past few years several hundred feet of the tip have been eroded away.

Only two square miles of the park's total of six are dry land. Most of the remainder is "between land", neither completely land nor water.

The marsh lands make up one of the few remaining deep freshwater marshes left in North America. But even the 2500 acres of marshland in the park are only a remnant, cut off and saved, of a vast marsh which stretched for miles north of the park boundary to the main shore of Lake Erie.

Sandspit near park's tip; nature trail



Monarch butterflies; boardwalk through marsh



The bedrock of the area is Devonian limestone, laid down in shallow seas some 300 million years ago. It is deeply buried under the sand of the park and no outcrops are seen in the area. Small fossils, from the rocks, may be occasionally found on the beaches.

The plants - sometimes lush, sometimes desert-like

Since Point Pelee is as far south as northern California, plant life in the park reflects the influence of a mild, southern climate. The surrounding waters of Lake Erie temper climatic fluctuations and help to give the park one of the longest frost-free growing seasons in Canada. Growth is rapid and lush until late June and provides an abundant and spectacular succession of flowers.

Then, in early summer, hot, dry spells usually produce a semi-arid, desert-like condition. Many herbaceous plants quickly change to a dormant state while some of the shallow-rooted shrubs set winter buds very early and shed much of their foliage. Shrubs often bloom profusely but frequently do not receive enough summer moisture to mature a crop of fruit. Prickly-pear cactus thrives under these circumstances. Its flowers in late June and early July attract many visitors to the park.

Climbing vines of many kinds festoon the shrubs and trees, making veritable tangles. Although not usually thought of as part of the woodland scene so far north,

forms of motor camping are provided at a serviced campground about 4½ miles south of the park entrance. It is equipped with kitchen, laundry, showers and washrooms.

Daily fees are moderate and camping space is allocated on a first-come, first-served basis. The maximum allowable stay is two weeks. The campground opens about April 1 and closes about September 30, depending on the weather.

Group camping is available to organized groups after making reservations with the superintendent. There are two sites available and reservations are assigned in the order they are received.

There is indoor accommodation of various types available in the nearby town of Leamington.

How to enjoy the park

Season - The park is open all year although some visitor services are seasonal. Summer is the busiest season, but winter picknicking is very popular.

Walking is the best way to see the park. There are two nature trails in the park, the Woodland Trail and the Boardwalk Trail. Both are easily located on the map overleaf. The Boardwalk Trail extends for two-thirds of a mile into the marsh to an observation tower overlooking the marshland. There is also a bicycle trail. A stroll down the long beaches provides a relaxed escape from day-to-day pressures.

Point Pelee is a bird watcher's paradise



lianas drape and hang from many of the tall trees. Grapes, poison ivy and Virginia creeper form these lianas.

Among the more notable wildflowers and shrubs are flowering spurge, wild potato vine, swamp mallow, hop tree, spicebush and common cat brier. Such trees as black walnut, sycamore, white sassafras, shagbark hickory, butternut, hackberry and red cedar are common.

Evergreen trees (conifers), so familiar to most Canadians, are almost entirely absent in the park. Point Pelee is one of the few places where the true deciduous forest of North America still exists in a near-primeval state.

The vegetation plays an important role in stabilizing the soil, for without plants the wind would blow the park back into the lake.

The animals - mainly birds, by the hundreds of thousands

Animals, like plants, depend on suitable environment for their survival, and different animals are found in the major life zones in the park. Mink and muskrat inhabit the marsh, while the woodland supports deer, coyotes, raccoons, skunks, grey squirrels and cotton-tail rabbits.

In addition to the typical Ontario mammals found at Point Pelee, several southern species occur, such as eastern mole, Baird's white-footed mouse and evening bat. Oddly enough, red squirrels and flying squirrels are not presently found in the park.

Fishing - The two game fish in the park marsh are northern pike and largemouth bass, but their numbers are declining. Carp are the most abundant, along with dogfish, sunfish, perch and assorted types of minnows.

In the surrounding waters of the lake, fishermen catch sheephead, perch and catfish. Sturgeon and walleye, once caught along the shoreline by the Indians, have all but disappeared from Lake Erie.

Fishing seasons vary from year to year and fishing regulations should be obtained from the administration building, the boat concession office or a park warden.

Fishing in park waters may be done without a permit under the conditions of the regulations, but for fishing in Lake Erie a licence issued by the Province of Ontario is required. It may be purchased from any Provincial Department of Lands and Forests office.

Snowmobiles are prohibited in the park because of the light snow cover and the fragile vegetation underneath. All other motorized land vehicles are restricted to regular roads.

Swimming and sunbathing - There are nearly 14 miles of fine, sandy beaches, fronted by Lake Erie. Five main beaches have parking lots and change rooms. Beach patrol and first aid are provided at the East Point and West beaches in season.

Other facilities - A variety of other facilities for visitors is available. Private business operates a concession booth and snack-bar, canoe and bicycle rental. There are grocery stores, restaurants, garages, laundries and other services in nearby Leamington.

Dogs and cats may be brought into the park, but for the protection of wildlife the dogs must be kept on a leash and under control at all times. No permit or vaccination certificate is required.

Some don'ts

National parks are selected areas set apart as nature sanctuaries and special care is taken to maintain them in their natural state. For this reason, all birds, animals, wildlife, trees, rocks, soil and fossils are to be left undisturbed. Even the wildflowers are not to be picked; they must be left for others to enjoy. Feeding, touching or molesting wild animals is not permitted.

Fires

Campfires may be set only in fireplaces provided for this purpose, or in outdoor portable stoves. Barbecues may be used only in campgrounds or picnic areas, and all coals must be dumped into existing park fireplaces.

Anyone finding an unattended fire should try to extinguish it, or if it is beyond his control, report it at once to the nearest park employee.

How to get the most out of your visit

To help you understand and appreciate the park's complex natural environment, you are urged to take advantage of the free interpretive program, conducted by a practising naturalist and his staff. It will provide you with an insight into how climate, lake, dunes, marshes, plants and animals are interrelated, and it will make your stay more rewarding.

Conducted hikes, auto caravans and special programs are held during the spring and summer months. Evening slide and film programs, talks and other events are held at the Nature Centre. Information on these events is available from bulletin boards, information offices and uniformed park staff.

Self-guiding nature trails, roadside exhibits and signs also interpret the park's environment. At some of these places, interpretive pamphlets provide more detailed information and these may be retained.

A naturalist will meet and address special groups if arrangements are made in advance.

Where to get information

Detailed information may be obtained from the administration building, the campgrounds and the Nature Centre. Uniformed staff will answer questions, provide maps and refer visitors to the various areas and facilities in the park. Special events are posted on bulletin boards.

Park wardens are usually available for general information and will help visitors whenever possible.

Additional information about the park is available from the Superintendent, Point Pelee National Park, R.R. 1, Leamington Ontario. For information about other national parks, write to the Director, National and Historic Parks Branch, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, 400 Laurier Ave. West, Ottawa 4, Ontario.

Published by the National and Historic Parks Branch under authority of Hon. Jean Charest, P.C., M.P., Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development © Queen's Printer for Canada, Ottawa, 1970 Catalogue No. R69-3650 Prepared by the park's staff and the Conservation Group, Information Services Division, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development Design: Gotschall & Ash Ltd.



Point Pelee National Park

- Highway
- Secondary Road
- Walking or Hiking Trail
- Lake, River, Creek
- Warden's Cabin
- ▲ Picnic Area
- ▲ Campground
- Parking
- Nature Trail
- Supervised Beach
- ▲ Youth Camp
- ▲ Comfort Station
- ▲ Observation Tower, Platform

Note: This is but a reference map, designed to give you a general idea of what you will find in this park. It is *not* a road, hiking or boating map. To find your way accurately, you should obtain a topographical map, available at the park administration office.

